examine these old seats with a view of assigning a date to them, we shall not find much reason for placing any of them earlier than the latter end of the fourteenth century. Before that time, I believe, the bodies of churches were left open and unencumbered, and whatever seats there were, were moveable. In the oldest illuminations which represent the interiors of Anglo-Saxon churches, we find the congregation placed on low stools scattered over the building. Nor between that period and the date I have mentioned do churches seem to have been regularly seated. That there were seats in some of them there is no doubt, for some few standards have been found which have been decided to be Early English and Decorated work, and the laborious investigations of the authors of the History of Pews, have discovered two instances in the thirteenth century, in which seats in churches are mentioned,—one in 1240, when Bishop Grostete, of Lincoln, enjoins that the patron shall have a seat in the choir,—another in 1287, where a synod, held at Exeter under Bishop Quivil, enacts that, in consequence of the frequent quarrels of parishioners about their seats, no one shall call any seat in the church his own, save noblemen and patrons. We must, therefore, suppose either that the seating was very partial, or else that, partaking, as it would do, of the unadorned character for which our early woodwork is so remarkable, it was removed to make room for more elaborate work, when about the commencement of the fifteenth century, the seats, which in many instances we have remaining, were erected. I confess I think it probable such an universal restoration should have taken place, and rather believe that the seats we now find are, in most cases, the original ones, even where the fabric itself is much older. We find in wills of this period many bequests towards the stalling or pewing of churches; but, I think, scarcely any anterior to the fifteenth century. When we consider that this was the age of Wycliffe and the Lollards, and that the doctrines which bore fruit in the Reformation more than a century afterwards, were then in their germ,—is it a far strained or improbable inference that the introduction of fixed seats was a mark of some change in the religious feeling of the day, probably of a greater attention to the ordinance of preaching as a necessary means of edification? In point of date, poppy heads are found earlier than square-headed panels, and are sometimes enriched by having an animal or kneeling figure carved upon the elbow. Poppy heads (a term perhaps derived from pupa or puppet-head) are usually made to imitate a bunch of foliage, the bud formed of crisp, unexpanded leaves, rising up in the middle, while the projections on each side are formed of leaves of the same plant in a more developed state. Those who wish to imitate this feature should be very careful in observing how naturally, in the old examples, the whole bunch of foliage grows up from the centre, and how the sides spring from the same stalk, and evidently form part of the same plant. I have seen modern designs of poppy heads realising the general outline with tolerable correctness, but which, when looked into, show the bud belonging to one plant and the sides to another, with the leaf of a third stuck on unmeaningly in the middle to hide the point of junction. So easy is it to copy the forms of mediæval art, and yet to miss the spirit of the whole.

The following measurements, which give the average dimensions of more than twenty seats, taken indiscriminately from different parts of the country, may not be without their use:—

| | ft. | in. |
|---|---|---|
| Width of seat from back to back | 3 | 2 |
| Height of standard | 3 | 2 |
| Width of standard | 1 | 6 |
| Width of seat | 1 | 0 |
| Height of seat | 1 | 5 |
| Height of back | 2 | 10 |

It is now time to consider this question practically,—having seen what the old seats were, and what the old arrangement was, to consider whether, under present circumstances, that arrangement should be introduced again, or whether our experience of past evils render any modifications of it necessary; and here I hope to be allowed to regret most sincerely, in a picturesque point of view, the necessity of having seats at all. Those who have ever had the happiness of seeing a fine church, with its area entirely free, where the eye is at liberty to wander unchecked from roof to base, and to drink in with eager gaze the various beauties presented without hindrance to the view, will be able to form some idea of what our churches lose by having their area occupied by seats. My regret, however, is, I know, hopeless and unavailing. The length of our services, the habits of our people, and, though the rubrics are (curiously enough) silent, the uninterrupted practice of certainly more than 500 years, all combine to render the realization of such a vision impossible; and as it is the intention of churches to have congregations, and these congregations must be seated, I will not waste your time by any lamentations over an unavoidable necessity. Still I may be permitted to express my opinion, that in placing rows of fixed seats in the bodies of our churches, our ancestors were committing a great mistake: they were admitting a wrong principle, and one which has led to very fatal consequences. While the area of the churches was left free and open, or only occupied by seats moveable at pleasure, the general right of every parishioner to his place in the parish church remained intact; and though it might be rarely exercised, and though, if it were exercised, the building probably might not have held all the parishioners at once, yet the right was there, and no one could point to any spot in the parish church, and say that that spot belonged to him individually, to the exclusion of his neighbours; but when the seats were fixed and appropriated, then came the beginning of the pew system. We are fortunate in having had the full iniquity of that system laid out before us; and, having the experience of former ages to profit by, let us be very careful, now that we are expelling this enemy from our churches, that we leave no loop-hole open by which it may creep in again. It is very difficult, I might say impossible, to disconnect the idea of fixedness from property: it is almost impossible for a man to sit in the same immoveable seat for any length of time, and not to cherish a belief that that particular spot belongs to him, to the exclusion of every one else; but if the seat be not fixed, if it can be moved at pleasure from one end of the church to the other, it is difficult to attach the idea of property, either to the seat itself, or the place where it usually stands. Fixed seats, then, I cannot but consider as a more picturesque sort of pew, and I am grievously afraid, in some cases of church restoration, that even the grosser faults of the pew system have not been eradicated, but that they are put up to be let to the best bidder in the same illegal manner that the pews used to be. But, to take a lower view of the question, and one, perhaps, more strictly in accordance with the purposes of our meeting here, there are other grounds on which I would urge the adoption of moveable seats in preference to fixed ones. If we wished to show off the beautiful proportions of a room, we would not fill that room with large and heavy blocks of furniture fixed to the floor, which would catch the eye and distract it from the general effect. So it is in a church. We depend for effect in a church on the general proportions of the whole, and harmony of the several parts: the height of the roof, the long perspective of the rows of columns, the play of light and shade from the windows, all ought to contribute their aid; but, frequently, the first thing that strikes one on entering a church are the rows of standards stretching out in every direction where the fancy of the architect, or more frequently of the building committee, may prompt that a better view of the pulpit may be obtained. This effect is particularly perceptible where the standards have poppy heads, which in general are made much too high and obtrusive. We ought, in fact, to consider seats as necessary evils, and to treat them so, to keep them under as much as possible, lest they grow again into those nuisances from which we are just escaping. The great difficulty with moveable seats is how to manage the flooring beneath them, for of course where the seats are moveable, the pavement will extend over the whole of the church—the habits of the people would induce them to object to sit with their feet on a tile or stone floor,—but whether that difficulty can be best overcome by matting and hassocks, or whether some loose boarding can be laid down under the seats, I leave to those gentlemen to decide, with whose province I have no wish to meddle, the professional architects who may be consulted on the occasion. I also wish to leave all details respecting the form and make of the seats in the same able hands, only premising that I very strongly recommend square-headed standards, in preference to poppy heads, both because they are less obtrusive, and catch the eye less, and also because in the present degraded state of ecclesiastical carving, the less carving there is about the church the better: in almost every case it is most unsatisfactory: I am therefore very glad that it has been decided to employ square-headed standards at Boston, and I doubt not that the committee have exercised a very sound judgment in the choice they have made. A handsome moulded capping of more or less elaborate design always looks well, and is much more satisfactory than a bad stereotyped copy of some mediæval poppy head, especially where one design is made to serve for the whole church. There are many other considerations both of cleanliness and convenience, which would induce us to prefer moveable seats to fixed ones. However, where a higher motive can be found, I am unwilling to say too much about a lower one, and as it seems to me that a great principle is involved in having the whole area of the church free and unencumbered, and the common property of every parishioner, I strongly recommend moveable seats, as conveying less the idea of exclusiveness and property than any other plan that can be devised. I am convinced that the principle is a sound one, and if any one engaged in church building will only work it out in any church in which he may be interested, every inhabitant of that parish, for generations yet to come, will have reason to bless the memory of that man who has restored to him the best and dearest privilege of a christian,—freedom to worship God after the manner of his forefathers, in his own parish church.

## NOTES IN THE PROVINCES.

*Chelmsford.*—The first stone of the new lunatic asylum for the county of Essex was to be laid on Thursday in the present week, by Mr. C. G. Round.

*Wisbech.*—Two plans for the enlargement of the workhouse having been obtained by the guardians, and some discussion on the necessity of an expenditure of 700*l.* or 500*l.* having taken place, it has been resolved to obtain tenders for the largest of the two plans, which had been prepared by Mr. W. Adams, the town chamberlain. The new works are intended to join the north end of the centre of the main building, and will present the same exterior appearance. By the first plan, after deducting 15 feet 6 inches for the staircases, two rooms will be obtained, 44 feet 6 inches by 20 feet wide, one to be appropriated as the male sick ward and the other as the male sick hospital; and a third room, 51 feet 6 inches by 21 feet wide, for the female hospital. By the second or smaller plan, a male sick ward and hospital, 21 feet by 20 feet 2 inches, and a female hospital 24 feet 2 inches by 20 feet 11 inches, may be obtained. The present workshops, which are in the way of ventilation, to be removed.

*Melton.*—The upper, or boys' school, in the church schools here, which are being reconstructed and enlarged, is now completed. It will be used also for public meetings, as it is the largest room in the town.——The surveyors of the highways have been improving the streets and public thoroughfares in this town by taking up the pavement of small pebbles and putting down flag-stones on both sides. The High-street, in addition to the flags, has been lowered at the upper end, and

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